



Insomnia: Tips for better sleep

Alternative Names: Sleep issues; Difficulty falling asleep; Insomnia concerns.

Information

Insomnia is difficulty falling or staying asleep. In many cases, changing a few behaviors can help you sleep better. Sometimes, medication is needed. Behavioral changes should be tried first.

Talk with your doctor or nurse if any of the following symptoms interfere with your ability to function during the day:

- Difficulty falling asleep
- Excessive sleepiness during the day
- History of falling asleep during the day at inappropriate times
- Nightmares or disturbing thoughts that keep you awake
- Pain, frequent urination, or unusual sensations that keep you awake
- Significant trouble getting out of bed in the morning
- Sleep that does not refresh you
- Waking up several times throughout the night
- Waking up early in the morning

Here are some simple tips to get a better night's sleep:

- If possible, wake up at the same time each day.
- Avoid performing activities such as eating and working in your bed.
- Avoid strenuous activity 2 hours before going to bed.
- Avoid caffeinated and alcoholic beverages in the evening.
- Avoid eating heavy meals at least 2 hours before going to sleep.
- Develop a bedtime routine that includes calming, relaxing activities.
- Make sure your sleep environment is quiet, dark, and is at a comfortable temperature.
- Don't go to bed more than 8 hours before you expect to start your day



Do something relaxing just before bedtime (such as reading or taking a bath) so that you don't think about worrisome thoughts. Watching TV or using a computer may be stimulating and disturb your ability to fall asleep. If you can't fall asleep within 30 minutes, get up and move to another room and engage in a quiet activity until you feel sleepy.

One method of preventing worries from keeping you awake is to keep a journal before going to bed. List all issues that worry you. By this method you transfer your worries from your thoughts to paper, leaving your mind quieter and more ready to fall asleep.

HOW MUCH SLEEP IS ENOUGH?

While 7 - 8 hours a night is recommended for most people, children and teenagers need more. Older people tend to do fine with less sleep at night, but may still require approximately 8 hours of sleep over a 24-hour period. The quality of sleep is as important as how much sleep you get.

References

[Morin CM, Benca R. Chronic insomnia. *Lancet*. 2012;379\(9821\):1129-41.](#)